
Forest Service meets with public for travel plan

Input for motorized use
of trails is essential

By ERIKA KIRSCH
Hagadone News Network

CATALDO — Denny Blankenship, of Rathdrum grew up recreating on the forested trails of the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District.

"So many trails are closed now," Blankenship said. "It's going to get to the point of 'oh, here's the five acres you can ride on.'"

Blankenship owns land along the Coeur d'Alene River and rides four-wheelers with family and friends in the district, he said. Blankenship also enjoys riding the St. Joe River area.



ERIKA KIRSCH/HNN

Mark Tihonovich, of Coeur d'Alene, and Hans Archer, right, of the Spokane area, check out a map of U.S. Forest Service land during the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District Travel Plan meeting at Canyon Elementary in Cataldo.

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Blankenship was just one of several trail users who came out to express his feelings about what should be included in the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District motorized plan at a public meeting last week at Canyon Elementary School in Cataldo. The purpose of the meeting was to gather information from the public regarding which trails within the district should be used for motorized travel, said Linda McFaddan, Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District deputy district ranger/project team leader.

High Mountain ATV Association and JEEPS were also at the meeting to express their desires for the trail system.

"This is going to be your motorized trail system," McFaddan said. "We want your input."

According to the U.S. Forest Service Web site, policies need to be put into place in order to accommodate an increasing number of off-road vehicle users on National Forest System lands. The process will take a few years, but the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District will decide which roads, trails and areas to designate for motor vehicle use, in coordination with state, county and local governments, according to the Web site.

The purpose of the motor-

ized travel plan project is to designate a reasonable route system for public access and recreation travel on the district. It will consider both the quantity and quality of experiences provided, in balance with forest management objectives and resource concerns.

Designated routes will include the class of vehicle and, if appropriate, time of year.

The public was invited to provide comments and suggestions. Several Forest Service maps were posted so those interested could provide proposals for the travel plan. Recreation, wildlife and aquatics screening stations were set up to map out the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District for users.

The purpose of this step was to identify any changes desired to the current condition of the district, McFaddan said.

Fifty-six proposals were gathered at the meeting and the Forest Service is still accepting proposals, McFaddan said. The next meeting will be June 22 in Coeur d'Alene.

Maps can be viewed at the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District offices in Fernan and Smeltonville. Maps are also available at the Shoshone County courthouse, McFaddan said.

Proposals submitted last week will be put onto a disc and available at the offices as well, McFaddan said.